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# Jack o' Hearts

A Comedy in Three Acts

By

EDITH M. BURROWS

*Author of "Their Lordships,"*

*"Dear Cyril," etc.*



BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1913

# Jack o' Hearts

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## CHARACTERS

MARY HART, *commonly known as "Polly."*

WINTHROP HART, *her brother.*

DR. HART, *father of Polly and Winthrop.*

MARY ROBINSON, *a friend of Polly's.*

BETTY DWYER, *the girl who lives next door.*

JOHN AMES, *young clergyman friend of Winthrop's.*

JACK BOTSFORD, *an unknown cousin of the Harts'.*

A MAID.

TIME.—The Present.

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# Jack o' Hearts

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## ACT I

SCENE.—*Large and comfortably furnished living-room at DR. HART'S. Bookcases along walls at back; pictures over these; reading table near centre front; small table with telephone at left back; fireplace at left front; doors center back and left center; two windows on right; couch at right; easy chairs near fireplace and table.*

*(Curtain rises, disclosing living-room at the Harts'. A maid is arranging the room. Telephone bell rings violently.)*

MAID. Hello! Yes, Doctor. Miss Polly, sir. I'll call her. Hold the wire. *[Exit, L.]*

*Enter POLLY HART, L., dressed for the street; goes to telephone.*

POLLY. Hello, Daddy. This is Polly. Oh, what a shame! Then you won't be home for lunch? Who, Daddy? Jack Botsford? Who's he?.....I don't remember ever hearing of such a cousin.....You haven't seen him for ten years? Oh, Daddy *(laughing)*, of course. I'll be nice to him, but I hate having full-grown relatives sprung on me. He'll be here for lunch, then, and you'll be home later on, probably? All right. Good-bye. *(Hangs up receiver.)* Now, isn't that the limit? A perfectly strange cousin, who may be anything but congenial, is turning up just as Mary is due to arrive. Well, I suppose I'll have to be nice to him. *(Calls.)* Celeste!

*Enter MAID, L.*

MAID. Yes, Miss Polly?

POLLY. The Doctor will probably not be here for lunch,

Celeste, but a cousin of ours, a Mr. Jack Botsford, is expected some time this morning, so your plans need not be altered. I am going out now to meet Miss Robinson, but will return before long. In case this cousin should get here before I come back, you will see that he is made comfortable.

MAID. Yes, Miss Polly. (*Exeunt POLLY, C., and MAID, L. Bell rings; reënter MAID, L., passes out C., and reënters C., with JOHN AMES, who carries suit-case.*) You wished to see Mr. Winthrop, sir? What name shall I say?

JOHN. Just tell him that "Jack" is here, please.

MAID. Yes, sir.

[*Exit, L.*]

JOHN. Well, well! but it will seem good to see old Winthrop again. I'm glad I thought of dropping in.

*Enter WINTHROP HART, L., and seeing JOHN, he rushes to him, shaking hands with great cordiality.*

WIN. Jack, old man, it's great to see you!

JOHN (*slapping WIN. on the back*). You're not the only one that's glad over this meeting; and may be it doesn't sound good to hear "Jack" again. I've been nothing but *John* and *Mr. Ames* ever since I entered the ministry.

WIN. That's so. Well, look who's here! I forgot for the time being that you'd become a parson.

(*Draws off and pretends to look at JOHN with increased respect.*)

JOHN. Oh, cut that, Win. I'm just about the same, you know, and most of the time manage to feel like a blooming hypocrite.

WIN. (*laughing*). Well, I see you're as easily "fussed" as ever. But say, old man, where did you come from, anyhow? Explain yourself.

(*During this speech JOHN takes off his overcoat, revealing ministerial garb. JOHN and WIN. seat themselves.*)

JOHN. You'll smile when I tell you what brought me into this part of the country. The fact is, I came up here to marry an old friend of mine.

WIN. To marry? (*Gasps for breath.*) You—marry?

JOHN. Oh, hold on. I mean to perform the ceremony, you know.

WIN. That's better, but, oh, good Lord, Jack, wouldn't I love to see you do it?

JOHN. The wedding was in the next town, so I came down here by trolley to wait over a train.

WIN. Wait over a train, indeed! Why, man, do you think I'm going to let you slip away like this after waiting five years to see you? You're going to stay right here with us, as long as you possibly can.

JOHN. Oh, honestly, Win, that's awfully good of you, but I really can't think of it. It's an imposition!

WIN. Nonsense. Now, have you really any good reason for not staying a few days with us?

JOHN. No, but I —

WIN. But me no buts! If you make another objection, I'll think you're afraid of my sister.

JOHN. Your sister? Say, Win, I met an awfully attractive girl coming from this direction, and, I thought, from this house. Could that have been your sister?

WIN. Oh, it notices attractive girls now, does it? There used to be a time when the critter didn't even see 'em. Guess you saw Polly all O. K. She just went out before you came.

JOHN. Polly? Is that her name?

WIN. No, her name is Mary, but we all call her Polly. But say, Jack, don't let's talk about the fair ones now. Come up to my quarters and make yourself comfortable.

[*Exeunt JOHN and WIN., L., with suit-case.*]

*Enter POLLY and MARY ROBINSON, C.*

POLLY (*putting arms around MARY*). You dear thing! It seems just ages since I saw you last. You don't know how much this visit of yours means to me after two years' separation.

MARY. 'Deed, Polly dear, and it means a lot to me, too. But you haven't changed a particle.

POLLY. I've been trying to make up my mind about you, and I think you are changed in some way, but I can't just tell what the change is.

MARY (*gravely*). I've lots to tell you some time, Polly, about my worthless self that I couldn't bring myself to write you, and that may explain some of the change. (*Changes to lighter tone.*) But for the present, it's just enough to see you again.

POLLY. I'm going to take you right up-stairs to your room, and then later on we can come down here for a good old-fashioned talk.

(POLLY and MARY move slowly toward L. during this speech ;  
exeunt L. Telephone bell rings ; enter MAID, L., and  
answers.)

MAID. Hello ! Yes, Doctor, this is Celeste.....I'm to tell Miss Polly that you have to meet some one and will not be here until late this afternoon? Yes, sir ; I'll tell her. Good-bye.

(Hangs up and exits, c.)

Enter WIN. and JOHN, L.

WIN. I'm awfully glad that you decided to stay, old man. Polly has a girl friend due to arrive to-day, and between us we ought to be able to stir up some fun.

JOHN. Polly—you know Mary seems to suit your sister better somehow—that is, if she's the girl I saw.

(Shifts uneasily as he catches WIN.'s amused glance.)

WIN. Say, if I didn't know you, Jack Ames, I'd think that you were some smitten on the fair maiden that you saw on our street. However, guess you'll find that Polly's name fits her all O. K. She's a regular breeze ; but the best sister a chap ever had.

JOHN. Oh, I'm sure she's a dandy if she resembles her brother.

WIN. Kindly imagine a very sweeping bow from me in thanks for that remark. (During these speeches the men have been seated by the fireplace. Now WIN. takes out his watch, whistles and rises.) Oh, Jerusalem ! I'd forgotten all about that meeting ! You won't mind, Jack, if I leave you for a space of perhaps twenty minutes or so? There's an important meeting that I've promised to attend, and I'm late now. Polly will look after you when she comes home, and you won't find her very formal. Wait ! I'll tell Celeste to let Polly know you're here as soon as she comes in. (Goes to door and calls.) Oh, Celeste !

Enter MAID, c.

MAID. Yes, Mr. Winthrop.

WIN. When Miss Polly comes in, will you kindly tell her that Mr. John Ames is here? (Turns to JOHN.) You'd rather camp out in my den than down here, wouldn't you, Jack?



JOHN. Yes; I think I would like it up there.

WIN. All right, Celeste; you tell Miss Polly that Mr. Jack is in my den.

MAID. Yes, sir.

[*Exit, L.*

WIN. There, so-long, Jack. You can find your way to the den, can't you? I'm off.

[*Exit, C.*

JOHN. Old Win hasn't changed a bit. I wonder if his sister is like him? It's funny I never met her when Win and I were in college together, but it never happened. Wonder if that girl I saw could have been his sister? Well, the mystery will soon be solved, for she'll know I'm here when she comes in. There's one thing I'm grateful for, and that is that she isn't formal.

[*Exit, L.*

*Enter POLLY and MARY, C.; sit in easy chairs near center stage.*

MARY. Now, Polly, tell me all about yourself.

POLLY. Honestly, Mary, there's nothing to tell. I wrote you very fully about all the things that were happening to little me.

MARY. I know you did, Polly; your letters were a joy.

POLLY. Well, truthfully, I can't say as much for yours. You always seemed to tell so little about yourself in them, especially lately.

MARY. The fact is, Polly, I was trying not to tell some things, but I want to tell them now, if you'll let me.

POLLY. Let you? I'm anxious for every word!

MARY. Well, just when did my letters begin to sound strange?

POLLY. Let me think,—I should say about six months ago. Why?

MARY. Six months ago was just about when it happened.

POLLY. It? What?

MARY. My engagement.

POLLY. Mary! You are engaged?

*(Rises and steps toward MARY, who holds up her hand and shakes her head.)*

MARY. No—not now.

POLLY. But I thought you said —

MARY. I was engaged, but it was broken off.

POLLY. Oh, Mary, I'm so sorry. Do I know the man?

MARY. I think not, and I'd rather not tell you his name.

POLLY. No, of course not. But how did it happen? Was it—did you feel that you had made a mistake?

MARY. No, it wasn't that. It was all a wretched misunderstanding, and, oh, Polly, let's not talk about it any more. I can't bear it.

(POLLY, *who has walked nervously about during MARY's explanation, comes to her chair and pats her shoulder.*)

POLLY. Of course, we won't talk any more about it now. Some other time perhaps you'll tell me more. Let me tell you something which is both funny and provoking. Just before I started out to meet you, Daddy telephoned and said that some unknown cousin of ours had turned up and was coming here for lunch, and probably for a visit. No one knows how long he's going to stay, and I really don't want to bother with him now, but I promised Daddy to be nice to him. His name is Jack—my heavens! I've forgotten his last name. (*Girls laugh.*) Of course, I'll just call him Jack; but when I introduce him to you, it may be somewhat awkward. How should I greet him, anyhow? What is the approved way of greeting a long-lost cousin; do you know?

MARY (*mischievously*). Why—er—I should rush up to him, seize his hand, and give him a nice cousinly kiss.

POLLY. You're not serious?

MARY. Certainly I am. I dare you to.

*Enter MAID, C.*

MAID. Oh, Miss Polly, I didn't know that you were home. The Doctor called up and said to tell you that he had to meet some one, and wouldn't be home till late this afternoon.

POLLY. Thank you, Celeste.

MAID. And Mr. Winthrop said to tell you that Mr. Jack was in the den.

POLLY. Good gracious, Mary, he couldn't have heard us talking?

MARY. No, of course not, Polly.

POLLY. Tell Mr. "Jack" that we are in the living-room, Celeste, and will be very glad to see him.

MAID. Yes, Miss Polly.

[*Exit, L.*

POLLY. Well, now I'm in for it.

MARY. Don't forget the dare.

POLLY. Leave it to me. (*Enter JOHN, L. MARY watches in amusement as POLLY rushes up to him and grasping his hand, throws her arm around his neck, and kisses him. JOHN almost faints.*) Hello, Jack, I'm awfully glad to see you. Celeste just gave me Win's message, or I'd have sent word to you sooner. This is really an unexpected pleasure.

JOHN. Er—yes. Quite. (*Strives to regain self-control.*)

POLLY. Mary, I want you to meet Jack. (*To JOHN.*) This is an old friend of mine, Miss Robinson.

JOHN. Miss Robinson, I am delighted to know you. (*Bows.*)

MARY. And I am glad to meet you.

POLLY. Now, Jack, do tell us all about yourself in these long years since we lost track of you.

JOHN. Why—er—really, I'm quite overcome to think that you ever did keep track of me. (*Face lights up with interest.*) But there's nothing of interest in the past.

POLLY. To be strictly truthful, I didn't ever keep track of you; that was just to break the ice.

JOHN (*looking dejected*). Oh, well, to leave the past and keep in the present. Didn't I see you leaving the house when I came in, Miss Hart?

POLLY. Don't call me Miss Hart: it sounds so formal. Just call me Polly: everybody does. Besides, didn't I call you Jack? (*Smiles at him.*)

JOHN (*completely demoralized*). Why, yes, I believe you did. It—it was awfully nice of you to—to do it.

POLLY. Well, then, say it.

JOHN. Say what?

POLLY. Polly, of course!

JOHN. Polly, of course—oh, no; I mean just plain Polly!

POLLY. Oh! just plain Polly. Now, Jack, do you think that's a nice way to talk to a girl?

(*POLLY and MARY laugh, and JOHN is much embarrassed.*)

JOHN. Oh, I say—you know what I meant.

*Enter WIN., C.*

WIN. Hello, everybody. You're getting on famously, I see. How are you, Mary? (*Shakes hands with MARY.*)

MARY. Well, Winthrop, it's nice to see you again.

WIN. And you, too. You're the second nice surprise that's happened to-day. The first one was Jack here.

(*Claps JOHN on back.*)

POLLY. Why, when did you get so well acquainted?

WIN. Ha! Jack, old boy. That's a bright question, isn't it? That girl has brains, if she is my sister. After two men have gone through college together, she wants to know where they got acquainted! Wake up, Polly.

POLLY. Gone through college together? Why, I didn't know that you were in college with Cousin Jack.

WIN. *Cousin* Jack? For heaven's sake, is this a dream? If so, will somebody kindly pinch me? Just who do you think this is? (*Points to JOHN.*)

POLLY. Why, isn't it—isn't it Cousin Jack? Daddy telephoned that he'd be here, and I thought, of course, it was he.

WIN. (*to JOHN.*) Come, "Cousin Jack," I see I'll have to introduce you to my sister, generally sane, but at present a little demented, and Miss Robinson. Ladies (*with flourishing bow*), my roommate in college—the Reverend John Ames.

POLLY. Oh, horrors!

CURTAIN

## ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Time, late afternoon of the same day.*

(*Curtain rises, showing WIN., POLLY and MARY on stage. WIN. and MARY are seated, and POLLY is walking frantically about.*)

POLLY. Won't you two please do something but laugh? I never was so mortified in all my life, and I certainly never can look that man in the face again.

WIN. Nonsense, Sis, don't be so tragic about it. John's a good sport, and he knows it was all a mistake. Besides (*chuckling*), I told him that you were not formal.

POLLY. Formal? Formal! Good gracious, Win, I kissed the man!

WIN. (*laughing*). Kissed him? Glory be! This is certainly rich. I knew you called him "Jack," but I didn't know that you had progressed to the stage that you speak of.

MARY. It was lovely to watch, Win. Polly grabbed the poor man, and before he could recover his breath, had told him that "this was really an unexpected pleasure."

WIN. Oh, cats! I'll bet it was for him. (*Howls with laughter.*) What—what did he say?

MARY (*wiping her eyes*). He said, "Er—yes, quite!"

POLLY. Now listen to me. You're going to stop talking about that awful break of mine right away, and, furthermore, you're both going to help me to avoid that man while he is here.

WIN. Oh, come now, Polly. You can't be rude to him, you know. He's one of the best friends I ever had, and this—er—kissing game wasn't his fault.

POLLY. Winthrop! (*Stamps her foot.*) Don't you refer to that incident again! Of course I'll be decent to him when I have to meet him, for your sake; but if you want me to do that, you've got to promise to keep me from being left alone with him while he's here.

WIN. All right, kid, I'll help you out, but I honestly think that you're foolish to make such a fuss just because you ki—(*clapping hand over his mouth*) that is,—made a mis-

take. (*Enter JOHN, L.*) Hello, John. Say, what do you think of some tableaux for the day after to-morrow? We had been talking about getting some up, and now that you and Mary are here to help us out, we ought to be able to make them go.

JOHN. Good plan, I'm sure, and I shall be glad to do all in my power to make them a success.

(*Looks at POLLY as he says this.*)

POLLY (*stiffly*). Thank you, Mr. Ames, we appreciate your offer.

WIN. And you'd appreciate it still more if you knew that Ames, parson though he is now, used to be our best dramatic coach in college.

MARY. Really! Well, I'm sure we'll all try to be docile pupils, Mr. Ames.

POLLY. Mary, will you show me how to do that embroidery now? I'm anxious to begin, and I'm sure Win and Mr. Ames will excuse us.

[*Exeunt POLLY and MARY, L.*]

JOHN. Do you know, Win, I'm awfully sorry that your sister feels so badly about that—well, about that——

WIN. Kiss?

JOHN (*jumping in astonishment*). Who told you?

WIN. She did. She is awfully cut up about it, but don't you worry. She'll get over it. Girls always do make a big fuss over nothing. Jumping Jupiter! I haven't had a sister for nothing. I know all the tricks of the animals—nearly. There's one of them can fool me, though, and she lives right next door, too.

JOHN. Aha! my young friend. I begin to see light. May I inquire the name of this fair—*animal*, did you say?

WIN. Well, somehow I don't care to apply that term to her. Her name is Betty—Betty Dwyer; and she's surely a peach.

JOHN. Why, of course; and when are you contemplating the fatal plunge?

WIN. Well,—you see, I—the fact is—I—oh, hang it all! I've plunged!

JOHN. Better still; then congratulations!

WIN. Sh! keep it dark. The family don't know yet, for Betty doesn't approve of long engagements.

*Enter MAID, C.*

MAID. Mr. Winthrop, sir, Miss Betty is at the door in the car, and wants you to take her down to Brighton's.

WIN. That's so. I did promise to go down there with her this afternoon. Say, Jack, I hate to rush off and leave you this way, but you see —

JOHN. Of course, I see. Don't think of staying on my account.

WIN. All right, Celeste. Tell Miss Betty I'll be out directly. (*Exit MAID, C.*) I wouldn't do this if it weren't for Betty, but I'm awfully gone on her. [*Exit, C.*]

JOHN. Yes, I know. I'm beginning to realize just what that "gone" feeling is. I've had it ever since I saw Win's sister come out of this house before I reached here; and it's been getting worse ever since. Isn't it just my luck to have that mistake about our meeting! Now, I don't suppose the girl will ever want to see me; and I'm just getting silly over her. Well, Rev. Ames, methinks you're in for it.

*Enter POLLY, L.*

POLLY. At last a moment in peace to think about that awful — (*Sees JOHN, and stops short.*) Oh, Mr. Ames, I didn't know you were here!

JOHN. Yes, I suppose you wouldn't have come if you had. Now, please, Miss Hart, as an old friend of your brother's, I'm going to take a liberty.

POLLY (*icily*). Yes?

JOHN. Yes. You were going to say something when you came in, and I venture to guess I know what it was —

POLLY (*interrupting*). I was saying that I should have a moment of peace to think about that awful war in Turkey, wasn't I? You must be very clever at reading minds, Mr. Ames.

JOHN (*completely dazed*). Clever? No, I'm very stupid, apparently. You know I thought you were going to say something else.

POLLY (*quickly*). Oh, I was! I was going to ask you whether you thought the Turks or the—the other ones were right.

JOHN. I — Hang it! I don't care now which one is right. I want to ask you—to tell you —

POLLY. Mr. Ames, surely you don't mean that you don't care about that dreadful war? Why, I should think that as a minister, you would feel that you ought to think deeply on such subjects as Turkey.

JOHN. But I tell you, I don't want to talk about Turkey.

POLLY (*sweetly*). All right; what do you want to talk about?

JOHN (*explosively*). You!

POLLY. Me? Oh, you prefer goose to turkey?

JOHN. Yes. (*Sees POLLY's grin.*) No! I don't know—oh, you know——

POLLY. Why, no, I don't, Mr. Ames. You were about to say?

JOHN. I was about to say—— (*Stops in embarrassment, meeting POLLY's glance.*) You mustn't look at me like that.

POLLY. Oh, you were going to tell me not to look at you. Perhaps, then, I'd better go? (*Moves toward door, L.*)

JOHN. No, no, please. That wasn't what I meant. You just disconcerted me by your glance.

POLLY. Very well. I'll turn my disconcerting glance in this direction.

(*Turns her back on him and looks at books in bookcase.*)

JOHN. That's better.

POLLY. Oh, thank you!

(*She doesn't turn, however, as she speaks.*)

JOHN. I didn't mean——

POLLY (*interrupting*). Don't you think it would be a good plan for you to say something that you do mean, for a change, Mr. Ames?

JOHN (*with determination*). Yes, I do, Miss Hart; and now I'm going to say it. When we met to-day——

POLLY (*wrathfully*). The least said about that, the soonest mended.

JOHN (*going on with his sentence*). Well, I want you to know that I didn't care a rap about that little—er—mistake.

POLLY (*furiously*). Mr. Ames, I should think you would know that some things are better left unsaid.

(*Sweeps majestically out of room, L.*)

JOHN (*sinking into armchair*). Well, now, I have done it! And I only wanted to make her feel comfortable.

*Enter WIN. and BETTY DWYER, C., in motor costumes.*

WIN. Hello, old man; all alone still? (*Turns to BETTY.*) Miss Dwyer, I want you to know a very good friend of mine—Mr. Ames.



BETTY (*extending her hand as JOHN bows*). I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Ames.

JOHN. Now that I have seen you, Miss Dwyer, will you allow me to congratulate Winthrop; and to you my best wishes.

BETTY. Thank you. Win said he had told you, but it's a secret yet, you know.

WIN. When I told Betty about your being here, Jack, she insisted on our coming immediately back. So here we are.

JOHN. Why, yes—I was just thinking that you made a very short trip. That was awfully nice of you, but I hate to break into your plans.

BETTY. Not at all. We were only being nice to ourselves.

(*Men's voices heard outside. Enter DR. HART and JACK BOTSFORD, C. Others turn to greet them.*)

DR. H. Hello, youngsters—why, how do you do, Mr. Ames? It's been a long time since we last met.

JOHN. Five years, sir. I'm glad to see you again.

DR. H. I want to introduce a new member of the family—our cousin, Jack Botsford, who is to be with us for a little visit. (*To JACK.*) These are Miss Dwyer, your Cousin Winthrop, and Mr. Ames. (*All four acknowledge greetings.*) Where's Polly?

JOHN. Er—I think she went up-stairs.

WIN. (*aside to JOHN*). Have you two been having it out?

JOHN. Why, no—not exactly; but she —

WIN. Gave you a bad quarter of an hour, eh? Well, she's capable of it.

(*During this speech of WIN.'s and JOHN's, DR. H., BETTY and JACK have been conversing apart.*)

DR. H. I suppose Mary's here now, isn't she?

WIN. Yes, Dad; she came before lunch.

DR. H. Well, I'm going to call those girls down-stairs. (*Goes L. and calls.*) Oh, Polly, come down here, won't you?

WIN. (*to JOHN*). I told Betty about your meeting with Polly, so you needn't be afraid of talking right out about your last interview. Was it spicy?

JOHN. Say, now, Win, I don't want you to misunderstand me about your sister's actions.

WIN. Oh, go on! I've lived with my sister for quite a few years, and I know pretty well how she can act by this time.

(*During this talk between WIN. and JOHN, BETTY and JACK have been conversing together, and POLLY and MARY have appeared at L., where they greeted DR. H. All three move toward front.*)

DR. H. Well, Jack, here is the rest of the family. Polly, this is your Cousin Jack, whom I went to meet this afternoon; and Miss Robinson, may I introduce Mr. Botsford?

POLLY. Oh, how do you do, Cousin Jack?

(*Shakes hands with him in rather a scared way and very conscious of the amused stares of the rest. MARY comes forward to shake hands, and stops short. She and JACK stare at each other in amazement.*)

JACK. Oh! Er—Miss Robinson and I have met before, I believe.

MARY (*agitated*). Yes, I have met Mr. Botsford.

(*She draws back near POLLY.*)

WIN. Then you know each other? How jolly!

JACK (*forcing a smile*). Yes, very.

WIN. Well, Dad, I move we take Cousin Jack up to his room now. He'll be wanting to get ready for dinner. Coming, John?

JOHN. Yes; let me take this.

(*Lifts suit-case from DR. H., and the four men exeunt, L.*)

BETTY. I really must be going home, too. It's getting very late and it's almost time to dress for dinner. Don't forget that you two girls have promised to go motoring with me to-morrow morning.

POLLY. We won't; and oh, Betty, have you decided on your costume for the tableau-dance combination?

BETTY. Yes; I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. Good-bye. [*Exit, c.*]

POLLY. Now, Mary, there's something queer about you and Jack Botsford. What is it? Isn't he all right?

MARY. Oh, yes, Polly, don't you see he is —

(*Drops into chair and covers her face with her hands.*)

POLLY. Not—Mary, not — (Pauses.)

MARY (*lifting her face*). Yes; the man to whom I was engaged!

CURTAIN

### ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Acts I and II. Time, evening, two days later. The tableaux and dance at the Harts' are in progress. Music and laughter heard at intervals behind the scenes.*

*Enter BETTY, C., costumed as a gypsy, and WIN. as a harlequin.*

WIN. But I tell you, Betty, you've just got to listen to me. I can explain everything if you'll only give me a chance.

BETTY. Apparently you prefer Miss Robinson to give you a chance to make the explanation to her, judging by your devotion to her for the past two days.

WIN. That's just what I want to explain.

BETTY. Oh, surely that doesn't need any explanation; it's a self-evident fact. Fortunately for us both, no one knows of any engagement between us, so that the breaking of it need make no difference.

WIN. (*gasping*). The breaking —

BETTY. Of our engagement, certainly. Now you may consider yourself quite free to spend *all* of your time with Miss Robinson. [*Exit, C.*]

WIN. (*rushing after her*). But Betty, wait! [*Exit.*]

*Enter POLLY, L., in Puritan dress as "Priscilla," and MARY as a Colonial lady.*

MARY. Oh, Polly, where do you suppose Winthrop disappeared to? I cling to that poor boy like a leech, for I'm wretchedly afraid of being left alone with Jack—Mr. Botsford, that is, and that would be simply dreadful.

POLLY. Are you sure it would be so dreadful?

MARY. Quite, for, oh, Polly, I thought that I didn't care for him any more, and I find that I—do. These two days have been awful.

POLLY. Then if that's the case, why don't you tell him quite honestly that you're sorry for your part in the misunderstanding? I'm sure that you'll find that he feels the same way.

MARY. I couldn't possibly do it, Polly, for, in the first place, I think you're mistaken about his feelings, and in the second place, he will have to take the initiative in clearing things up. I just can't.

POLLY. Well, I'm very sorry, for I can't bear to see you so unhappy, and Jack seems like a dear boy. Maybe it will come out all right yet. In the meantime, you go on back into the drawing-room; we can't both be away like this without being missed. I'll try to find Winthrop and send him to you. (*Exit MARY, C.; enter WIN., L.*) Hello, Win, I was just looking for you. You're wanted in the drawing-room to protect Mary.

WIN. (*heatedly*). Mary be hanged!

POLLY. Winthrop Hart! do you know what you said?

WIN. Yes! I said "Mary be hanged!" and I meant it. She's gotten me into enough trouble for me to want to officiate at the hanging.

POLLY. Why, Win, what do you mean? What trouble could Mary get you into?

WIN. No trouble at all, of course. She only succeeded in breaking my engagement to Betty. A mere trifle, I assure you.

POLLY. Your engagement to Betty? Oh, Win, I didn't know —

WIN. No, of course you didn't. Otherwise you might have been a little more cautious about ordering me to dance attendance on Miss Robinson, morning, noon, and night, until we're beastly sick of each other,—just so she wouldn't be left alone for a minute with the man who probably would have been her husband by now, if she had only had good sense.

POLLY. But Win, you oughtn't to speak so of Mary.

WIN. Oh, Mary, Mary, Mary; always Mary! What about Betty? It seems to me she might have some consideration in this game. She stood my apparent infatuation for Mary as long as she could, and then she got ripping mad and broke the engagement, without giving me a chance to explain. A lovely mess, I call it!

(*Walks to and fro in excitement during this and succeeding speech.*)

POLLY. It certainly is a fine pickle.

WIN. I should say so! Here am I trying to make John have a good time, and you acting like the Consolidated Ice Trust every time the poor fellow says boo! to you. Then

there's Jack, whom we were to entertain; and the way we do it is to produce his long-lost fiancée, who freezes him when she is with him and goes mooning around like a sick cat when he's not there. Oh, I know! And last, but not least, here's poor me trying to make everybody happy, and getting in wrong with Betty, who's worth the whole bunch of you put together.

*(Exit, c., fuming. POLLY sits in chair.)*

POLLY. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Now what am I going to do? And the worst of it is that everything that Win said is true,—that is, all except my acting like an “ice trust” to Mr. Ames. I'm sure I'm always polite to him, and I don't see how Win could expect me, on such short acquaintance, to fall on the man's neck. *(Stops short.)* Good gracious! I'm glad I didn't say that to Win, or he'd have been quite likely to have reminded me that I had fallen on his neck on still shorter acquaintance. Oh, shall I never forget that horrible experience? *(Rises and exit, c.)*

*Enter JOHN, L., dressed as John Alden.*

JOHN. These clothes do certainly make a fellow feel like a fool. The only compensation is the fact that I'm in a tableau with her. *(Sighs and then laughs.)* Well, well, who would have dreamed a week ago that by this time I'd be saying “with her” in that tone of voice. It's a good thing I can get some satisfaction out of my own tone of voice, for I'm destined to get mighty little from hers. Ever since my fatal attempt at making her feel comfortable about our meeting, she seems to be devoting all her energies to making me feel uncomfortable. And yet I feel sure that she can be just as sweet and considerate as she is being the contrary of those things now. Anyhow, I've gotten to the stage where I must let her know that I love her; and how I'm going to do it before I leave to-morrow morning, when she won't let me see her alone for a moment, is more than I can see. *(Seats himself in chair near center-table and thinks; picks up a pen from a pen-tray and drums idly on the table with it; suddenly becomes conscious of what he is holding.)* Hullo! Why didn't I think of that before—a note? And now for paper. *(Starts to feel in pockets, then remembers costume.)* Oh, hang these clothes! *(Finds a piece of paper on desk.)* Ah, here's a piece. And now for the epistle. *(Thinks deeply.)* If I tell her openly that I love her and want to see her alone, she may not come. On the other

hand, if I don't tell her I love her, but just say that I want to see her, she may not come either; and in that case I won't have accomplished anything. "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady," so guess I'll risk it. Now for a more tactful beginning than I made last time. (*Pauses and then writes his note; reads.*) "Letting bygones be bygones, only remember that I love you, and must see you before I leave to-morrow morning. Will you meet me in the living-room after our tableau? Jack." That signature was an especial stroke of diplomacy on my part, for it will let her know that I liked her to call me that. It only remains for me to get it to her now. (*He rises and MAID walks through room from C. to L.*) Oh, Celeste!

MAID. Yes, sir?

JOHN. Will you get this note to Miss Mary as soon as possible?

MAID. Certainly, sir. I'll give it to her at once. [*Exit, L.*]

JOHN. Well, that certainly takes a load off my mind. Now I suppose I'd better get along, as I'm to be stage director of this performance. [*Exit, C.*]

*Enter MARY, L.; directly after her, MAID.*

MAID. Oh, Miss Mary! I've been looking for you. I was to give you this note at once.

MARY. A note—for me? Thank you, Celeste. (*Exit MAID, L.*) Who can be writing notes to me? (*Opens note.*) Why, it's from Jack!

(*Sinks into chair by fireplace and reads note. Her expression changes to one of joy.*)

*Enter POLLY, C.*

POLLY. Oh, here you are, Mary. They are ready for you. (*Sees MARY's face.*) Why, what has happened?

MARY. The loveliest and most wonderful thing in all the world. Read this note from Jack. (*Hands POLLY note.*)

POLLY (*reading*). "Letting bygones be bygones, only remember that I love you, and must see you before I leave to-morrow morning. Will you meet me in the living-room after our tableau? Jack."

MARY (*rising*). Yes, and isn't that a fitting climax to our visit with you good people? Oh, Polly! (*Kisses her.*) I never knew how wretched I had been until I was happy once more. And now I must go. (*Runs lightly out C.*)

POLLY (*looking intently at note*). Jack Botsford never wrote that note. He wrote an address for me this morning, and the handwriting, though similar, is not the same. Mary must have been so excited that she didn't stop to think of the writing. She must never know that she made a mistake; but how to prevent it? First, I'll destroy the note. (*Walks over to fire and puts note on it.*) So far, so good. Now, even though Jack didn't write that note, I'm sure he feels that way, for he told me so to-day in confidence, but he's too proud to make the first advance; so I must get him quickly and explain. (WIN. *appears in doorway at c.*) Oh, Win, you're just the one I want. Come in here. (*Enter WIN.*) Listen! get Jack Botsford and bring him here at once and at all costs.

WIN. Say! Is this another trick where I'm to be general utility man and cat's-paw,—because if it is —

POLLY (*stamping her foot*). Hurry, idiot! Do what I tell you, and your affairs will straighten out in no time.

WIN. Oh, my! honest? I'm off. [*Exit, c.*]

(POLLY *walks about in excitement.*)

POLLY. Goodness! I hope I'll tell him in the right way.

*Enter JACK in cavalier costume, and WIN., c.*

WIN. Here's your man, Polly.

POLLY. Jack, are you sure you still love Mary?

JACK. Great heavens, Polly, what a question! Of course I do, and always shall. It's she who has changed, as I told you.

POLLY. But suppose she hasn't changed?

JACK. See here! Don't you say a thing like that unless you mean it. (*Grasps POLLY's wrists.*)

POLLY. Why, Jack, of course I mean it. Mary does love you, and to-night she thinks that she got a letter from you, telling her that you still love her, and asking her to meet you here after your tableau.

JACK. But who—why, I didn't write her that letter, though goodness knows I've wanted to.

POLLY. I know you didn't, but for pity's sake, don't let her find that out until you've made up.

JACK. But what am I to do?

POLLY. Just stay here, and I'll send her in to you. The rest I'll leave to your wits. But remember the happiness of both your lives is in the balance, and be careful. [*Exit, c.*]

JACK. Why, I never heard anything like this. Winthrop, will you kindly explain?

WIN. Just do as you're told, and shut up. I've got trouble of my own, man! *[Exit, L.]*

*(JACK stands looking toward door at C.; soft dance music heard outside and MARY slowly comes in C., looking straight at JACK.)*

MARY *(softly)*. "Letting bygones be bygones, only remember that I love you." Oh, Jack, I've been so wretched.

*(JACK puts his arms around her, and they stand so in center of stage.)*

JACK. And so have I; but it's over, thank heaven!

*(BETTY appears for a moment at door at C., and WIN. at L.; both duck hastily out of sight as they see JACK and MARY.)*

MARY *(freeing herself from JACK)*. Come, we must go now. There's the music for the minuet, and they'll be waiting for us.

JACK. Let them wait, say I; it's in a good cause.

*[Exeunt, C.]*

*Enter WIN., L., peers about, and then goes to C., and calls softly.*

WIN. Hey, Betty!

BETTY *(suddenly appearing from other side of center door)*. What?

*(WIN. jumps.)*

WIN. Good Lord! how you scared me. I didn't know you were as near as that. Well, did you see it?

BETTY. Yes, and that accounts for my being so near when you called. I had to hide behind a curtain out there when they passed. *(Both laugh.)*

WIN. Well, say, Betty—about our engagement.

BETTY. What about it?

WIN. Is it still broken?

BETTY. No, silly, of course not, and it never was, any of the time; only a little bit cracked.

WIN. If that's the case, I say we go into the conservatory and — *(Pauses.)*



BETTY. What?

WIN. Mend it! Come on.

[*Exeunt, c., laughing.*]

*Enter POLLY, L. She walks slowly and sinks into chair by fireplace as if very tired.*

POLLY. Now, thank goodness, that little part of my conspiracy worked beautifully. Jack and Mary are dancing the minuet now with lighter hearts than they've known for a long time. Of course, Win and Betty will make up, so it but remains for me to console the only one who isn't happy as a result of to-night! Poor Mr. Ames! He will be so disappointed about Mary. I shall scarcely know how to tell him of her happiness. It's queer that I never noticed that he was especially interested in her. I even thought—but that just shows how self-conscious and conceited I must be. Of course, the minute I saw that note and realized that Jack didn't write it, I knew it must have been Mr. Ames, as he's the only other "Jack" in the house. Well, I'll have to break the news to him as gently as possible.

(*Soft minuet heard in distance and sounds of laughter.*  
POLLY gazes into fire as JOHN enters c.)

JOHN. Ah! Miss Hart. At last a moment alone.

POLLY. Yes, Mr. Ames, and I wish I could tell you something that you would like to hear.

JOHN. You're not going to tell me that there is no hope?

POLLY. I'm afraid I'll have to. You see Mary and Jack were engaged before they came here, and have just righted a misunderstanding to-night. I'm sorry that their happiness should mean unhappiness to you.

JOHN. But it doesn't. Why should I object to Miss Robinson's engagement?

POLLY. Why? Don't you love her?

JOHN. Love her? Me? Goodness, no. I——

POLLY. Didn't you write her a note and send it to her to-night?

JOHN. A note? Why, the note I wrote was for you, and—oh, I remember. I told the maid to give it to Miss Mary, and, of course, she thought I meant Miss Robinson.

POLLY. Yes, of course. (*Laughs.*)

JOHN. But then I'm to understand from your remarks that you know what was in the note?

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JACK O' HEARTS

POLLY (*in low voice*). Yes, Mary showed it to me, thinking that Jack wrote it. So you see, Mr. Ames, you were responsible for their happiness.

JOHN. Yes, but Polly, knowing that that note was for you, have you nothing to say to me except about their happiness?

POLLY. Yes, I have.

JOHN. Well, what is it?

(*Grips the back of a chair with his hands.*)

POLLY. "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

(*Rises.*)

JOHN (*stepping forward*). Polly!

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